

## Friendship and socio-cultural context. Experiences from New Zealand and Indonesia

*Drawing on ethnographic data from New Zealand and Indonesia, our aim is to explore the socio-cultural embeddedness of friendship. At the core of our analysis are individual friendship experiences by New Zealand Māori and Indonesian actors. Particular attention is given to the interrelation of socio-cultural background and individual practice, both within and across cultural boundaries. Our data suggest the co-existence and deep entanglement of multiple notions of relatedness and interaction in both societies. In their cross-cultural friendships, indigenous actors often have to juggle different and sometimes conflicting friendship conceptions and norms. The relatively informal and open character of friendship relations allows for the construction of difference and sameness across various social dimensions. Our empirical cases show how actors actively engage in different types of sociality to meet different needs, and how these relationships enable them to both de- and reconstruct different socio-cultural identities. With this contribution we attempt to highlight the importance of a critical reading of friendship that accounts for the specific socio-historical and -cultural setting and propose to expand the European ideal of friendship in favour of a more inclusive concept.*

### Introduction

As the traditional institution of the family has undergone fundamental change, the more informal social category of 'friend' has become increasingly significant in the lives of human beings throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> The increasing inter-

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Sandra BELL/Simon COLEMAN: The Anthropology of Friendship: Enduring Themes and Future Possibilities. In: The Anthropology of Friendship. Sandra BELL/Simon COLEMAN (eds.). Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999; Ursula NÖTZOLDT-LINDEN: Freundschaft: Zur Thematisierung einer vernachlässigten soziologischen Kategorie. Opladen: West-deutscher Verlag, 1994.

connectedness of our contemporary world(s) has led to a new variety of social relationships, in which individual actors engage in diverse and flexible ways.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of an affective interpersonal relation that goes beyond the ties of family or kin can be found across different cultures and historical epochs and emerges in varying forms of socio-cultural expression. Indeed, different conceptions of friendship can be found within a single society depending on such diverse factors as age, gender, social status.<sup>3</sup> In cross-cultural friendships in particular, the respective culture-specific contents and practices come to the fore.<sup>4</sup> In such cross-cultural friendships, conflicting or even contradictory friendship conceptions may in fact inhibit the formation of such friendships. On the other hand, the formation of cross-cultural friendships may lead to more flexible forms of sociality that allow the actors to actively construct, de- and reconstruct existing boundaries between self- and other, to reveal and/or to conceal conflicting moral norms.<sup>5</sup>

Within the academic tradition there exists a noticeable trend towards friendship research. As anthropologists have begun to investigate the topic in more detail, they have started to challenge some widely spread ethnocentric assumptions on sociality and modernity and have called for a study of friendship that focuses on its embeddedness in indigenous forms of sociality. In order to grasp the great dynamics of friendship relations, the socio-cultural context needs to be considered as well as the actors' individual life-worlds and self-conceptions. How do actors conceptualise their friendships within their wider socio-cultural environment? How do they engage in friendships with others and on what grounds do they establish close personal relationships? How do they experience and place their friendships in their wider net of social relations?

This contribution takes up these questions by investigating individual friendship relations in two rather different societal settings: New Zealand and Java / Indonesia. By focusing on cross-cultural friendships, we discuss how New Zealand Māori and Indonesian actors experience and conceptualise their

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2 Mike FEATHERSTONE: Postnational Flows, Identity Formation and Cultural Space. In: Identity, Culture and Globalization. Eliezer BEN-RAFAEL/Yitzhak STERNBERG (eds.). Leiden, Brill, 2001, 483–536.

3 For example, BEER: Anthropology of Friendship. 2001; James G. CARRIER: People Who Can Be Friends: Selves and Social Relationships. In: The Anthropology of Friendship. Sandra BELL/Simon COLEMAN (eds.). Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999.

4 In contrast to GRÄTZ/MEIER/PELICAN (2003) we do not speak of inter-ethnic or inter-group friendship. We understand the term cross-cultural as more inclusive and allowing for a greater diversity in social as well as cultural difference. As the analysis will show, this is particularly important in such diverse countries as Java / Indonesia and New Zealand, where the complexities of social interaction call for a more inclusive category than 'ethnic group', or 'ethnicity' respectively.

5 Bettina BEER: Freundschaft als Thema der Ethnologie. In: Zeitschrift für Ethnologie 123, 1998, 191–213.

friendships with others of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. We will show how the notion of friendship cuts across a variety of conceptions of relatedness and social practices that are skilfully juggled by the actors depending on their respective socio-cultural and political environments and individual experiences.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that the following does not present a systematic comparative account of friendship practices in Java / Indonesia and New Zealand. Rather, we are aiming at a critical juxtaposition of contemporary friendship practices and overlapping notions of relatedness. We will argue for a more inclusive theoretical conception of friendship that allows for a contextualised analysis of individual friendship practices in diverse socio-cultural contexts. In what follows, we will first look at some of the more recent developments in friendship research. Secondly, we will turn to the specifics of each socio-cultural setting and sketch out a brief historical development. In the third part, we will turn to our empirical data: After sketching out local conceptions of friendship and related forms of sociality in both societal settings, we will outline four representative cases (two from each society). In the final part of our paper, we will discuss some implications for further friendship research.

## Friendship and context

In anthropology, apart from some older, more general works,<sup>7</sup> the available literature on friendship remains relatively sparse. It is only very recently, that there has emerged a new and more critical body of anthropological literature on friendship, which challenges some widely spread assumptions on sociality and modernity in social theory.<sup>8</sup>

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6 Our analysis draws on ethnographic data, which was collected as part of the interdisciplinary research training group *Friends, Patrons, Followers* at Freiburg University, Germany. The New Zealand study focuses on Māori-Pākehā friendships and was conducted by Agnes Brandt. Most of her fieldwork was carried out in the city of Auckland. For the results on Javanese friendships see Eric Anton HEUSER: *Friendship in Java. Culture, social context and relatedness*. Unpublished PhD-Thesis. Freiburg University, 2010. For each project, ethnographic fieldwork was conducted over a total period of 13 months.

7 Among others: *The social anthropology of complex societies*. Michael BANTON (ed.). London, Tavistock Publications, 1966; Robert BRAIN: *Freunde und Liebende. Zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen im Kulturvergleich*. Frankfurt am Main: Goverts, 1976; Yehudi A. COHEN: *Social Structure and Personality. A Casebook*, New York u. a., 1961; William B. GUDYKUNST: *An Exploratory Comparison of Close Intracultural and Intercultural Friendships*. In: *Communication Quarterly* 33 No. 4, 1985, 270–283; *The Compact. Selected Dimensions of Friendship*. Elliott LEYTON (ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.

8 See for example: Bettina BEER: *Anthropology of Friendship*. In: *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Neil J. SMELSER/Paul B. BALTES (eds.). Kidlington: Elsevier, 2001; Tilo GRÄTZ/Barbara MEIER/Michaela PELICAN: *Zur sozialen Konstruktion von*

Especially in sociological theory, for a long time the growing prominence of friendship in contemporary society was related to the process of internal differentiation of modern 'Western' societies. Friendship and the associated notion of a voluntary relation beyond the family context, was seen as a substitute for the declining family, which has undergone fundamental change in modern society.<sup>9</sup> This rather ethnocentric perspective was taken up implicitly by earlier anthropological research, which has seen kinship as the main structuring principle in more 'traditional' respectively, non-Western societies – leaving only little or no space in these societies for friendship as a social category. Earlier anthropological works have thus focused on the structural and functional aspects of friendship. Despite acknowledging the existence of social categories such as quasi-kinship and adoption, these works have failed to grasp in detail emic friendship conceptions and practices in diverse societal contexts that go beyond predominant Western-European ideas of friendship.<sup>10</sup>

The contemporary friendship model<sup>11</sup> remains influenced by European ideal discourses and accentuates a voluntary relation that is more or less free of self-interest and utilitarian considerations, whereas more instrumental and asymmetrical ties are often regarded with some suspicion as to the friendship content of such relations – a rather limited ideal that less frequently holds for the level of social practice. In fact, depending on the socio-cultural and economic context, the label of 'friendship' may be more readily applied to relationships that are also affective but rather asymmetrical, and that are often employed strategically and motivated by self-interest, among other things.

More recently, anthropologists have begun to investigate friendship as a social relationship embedded in, and thus influenced by the particularities of a certain cultural context. As a result, they have started to argue in favour of a more inclusive conception, which accounts for the socio-cultural context in which close personal relations are practised by individual actors for diverse reasons

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Freundschaft. Überlegungen zu einem vernachlässigten Thema der Sozialanthropologie. In: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 53, 2003.

- 9 For more details see Anthony GIDDENS: *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- 10 See for example: LEYTON, *The Compact*, 1974; David JACOBSEN: *Friendship and social order in urban Uganda*. Menlo Park, California: Cummings Publishing Company, 1973; Eric R. WOLF: *Kinship, friendship and patron-client relationships*. In: *The social anthropology of complex societies*. Michael BANTON (ed.). London, Tavistock Publications. 1966, 1 – 22.
- 11 In Western-European philosophical tradition in particular, the Aristotelean ideal conception of a symmetrical friendship bond based on affection, voluntariness, some sense of reciprocity, likeness and equality reverberates in present-day ideals of 'true friendship' – both outside of and within academic theory. See ARISTOTLE: *The Nicomachean Ethics*. The Dover Thrift Editions. Oxford, New York: Dover Publishing, 1998.

and needs.<sup>12</sup> As Grätz et al. note, social relationships not qualifying as friendships to the Western-European observer may indeed constitute indigenous friendship categories; categories that have more or less been ignored or rendered irrelevant in previous academic research.<sup>13</sup>

There exists of course the problem of distinguishing friendship from other social relationships. As a social category of low institutionalisation, friendship often 'happens' in close proximity to other social categories, such as family relations, romantic relationships, exchange relationships, alliances, and even patronage networks. However, to simply dismiss the existence of friendship in a given socio-cultural setting because of definitional problems surely does not provide the best solution.

In order to sufficiently grasp the dynamic of this social category, a theory of friendship is needed that accounts for ruptures and ambivalences inherent in the ideas and practices of friendship within their respective socio-cultural, economical and political contexts. We therefore argue for an inclusive understanding of this multi-faceted social phenomenon that allows conceptual space for multiple, possibly conflicting friendship conceptions that may co-exist, overlap and even compete depending on the specific context and the actors' motivations, interests and values.

## Two socio-cultural settings

### Aotearoa New Zealand

In New Zealand, or Aotearoa as it is called in the indigenous Māori language, the societal setting is characterised by a relatively small population of just over four million inhabitants in which the postcolonial situation in combination with a rapidly changing culture composition through immigration has important implications for existing group dynamics.

Since the 1980s, the New Zealand government has espoused an official policy of biculturalism.<sup>14</sup> Based on the Treaty of Waitangi, an official document signed

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12 See for instance the publications of the research group around Günther Schlee at the Max-Planck-Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (<http://www.eth.mpg.de>). Please refer to: Sozialer Sinn. Zeitschrift für hermeneutische Sozialforschung 1, 2003; Freundschaft und Verwandtschaft. Zur Unterscheidung und Verflechtung zweier Beziehungssysteme. Johannes F.K. SCHMIDT/Martine GUICHARD/Peter SCHUSTER/Fritz TRILLMICH (eds.) Konstanz: UVK, 2007.

13 GRÄTZ/MEIER/PELICAN: Zur sozialen Konstruktion von Freundschaft, 2003.

14 The concept of biculturalism was first introduced to the New Zealand context in the late 1960s: The Māori People in the Nineteen-Sixties: A Symposium. Eric SCHWIMMER (ed.). Auckland: Blackwood and Janet Paul Ltd., 1968.

between the British Crown and local Māori tribes in 1840, the bicultural ideal constructs the indigenous Māori as equal co-partners with the majority European-Pākehā population.<sup>15</sup> As a kind of ‘charter’ for partnership and equality, the Treaty today provides the basis on which historical grievances can be addressed by Māori. It therefore constitutes an important part of the wider decolonisation project.

The egalitarian ideal underlying the bicultural policy is contravened by a social reality in which Māori as a group – even though they are well integrated into all areas of social, political, and economical life – continue to be affected more severely by the effects of social and economical inequality than their European-Pākehā peers. On a political level, the bicultural ideal is not only challenged by Māori’s ongoing struggle for decolonisation, but also by constantly rising numbers of ‘other’ groups in the country. These groups also claim a place in New Zealand society thereby challenging the primacy of Māori-Pākehā relations. The result is a somewhat politicised culture discourse that often constructs Māori and Pākehā as different and exclusive, rather than inclusive categories.<sup>16</sup>

In the case of Māori, the contemporary notion of a pan-tribal indigenous identity is based on their status as the “custodians” or “people of the land” (*tangata whenua*) and emerged as a result of the colonial experience.<sup>17</sup> Even though a distinct relation to the land as both material and spiritual domain is claimed to be an important characteristic of Māori modes of identification, especially Māori living in the city today find it difficult to sustain active links to their ancestral homelands. What is more, in an increasingly interconnected world, the actors draw on a range of possible identifications and belongings. As

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Bicultural goals today include the incorporation of Māori perspectives into decision-making processes, the improvement of inter-group relations through the celebration of cultural distinctiveness, and the creation of more or less autonomous patterns of Māori self-determination. See, for instance: Augie FLERAS/ Paul SPOONLEY: *Recalling Aotearoa: Indigenous Politics and Ethnic Relations in New Zealand*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1999, 237 – 238; Jeffrey Sissons: *Tall Trees Need Deep Roots – Biculturalism, Bureaucracy and Tribal Democracy in Aotearoa-New Zealand*. *Cultural Studies* 9, 1995, 61 – 73.

15 The term ‘Māori’ refers to the indigenous peoples of New Zealand. While ‘Pākehā’ follows no unitary definition, in common usage it refers to New Zealanders of predominately European descent. In this article the term refers to New Zealanders of European descent who identify as Pākehā and/or New Zealand-European. This may include persons identifying as “New Zealanders” but acknowledging a cultural heritage linked to the settler population.

16 For a detailed discussion of Māori and Pākehā modes of identification and belonging and their implications for cross-cultural friendship see Agnes BRANDT (forthcoming): *Identity and belonging in cross-cultural friendship: Māori and Pākehā experiences*. In: *Movement, place making and making identifications in Oceania*. Elfriede HERMANN/Wolfgang KEMF/ Toon VAN MEIJL.

17 Ranginui WALKER: *Māori Identity*. In: *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*. David NOVITZ/ Bill WILLMOTT. Wellington, NZ: GP Books, 1989, 35.

'glocalised'<sup>18</sup> urban lifestyles offer new modes of cultural (re)affirmation, a distinct Māori identity constitutes only one among many. After all, since the arrival of the first Europeans, interaction between Māori and Pākehā has involved multiple relationships across cultural and ethnic boundaries including intermarriage, from which have come forth individuals who can – and do – identify in multiple and changing, rather than singular and static ways.

Mainly because of their lack of ambiguity and flexibility, politicised representations of Māori 'culture' and 'identity' (just as Pākehā) do not fit easily with individual life experiences and everyday social practices.<sup>19</sup> As the ethnographic material discussed below reveals, this situation, in which an official culture discourse clashes with actors' lived experiences, has important implications for the ways in which Māori actors construct themselves and others along often multiple and sometimes conflicting lines. It also influences the ways in which they construct and practice their friendships – with other Māori but also with non-Māori, in particular with Pākehā. Culture politics and identity making are often highly sensitive, controversial and emotional topics that are not only reproduced but also creatively reconstructed and re-imagined in cross-cultural friendships.

#### Java / Indonesia

In Indonesia, the socio-cultural setting is characterised by a complex interplay of different islands and a vast variety of intra-island cultures, religions, ethnic groups and languages. The country is the largest island state in the world with more than 200 languages and cultural groups.

In comparison to the New Zealand setting, the inter-group dynamics are almost reversed. The group of Westerners living in Indonesia constitutes a minority in relation to the Indonesian majority and is often associated with the country's colonial past. Such colonial images linger on and influence indigenous

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18 *Glocalisation* is characterised by the emerging and intermixing of diverse, overlapping fields of global-local linkages. This condition of *glocalisation* represents a shift from more territorialised socio-cultural processes bound up with the nation-state society to a more fluid and translocal process in which global cultural goods are locally appropriated. Culture has become a much more mobile and cultural forms and practices often disconnected from more separate geographic, institutional, and ascriptive embeddedness. Also see Wayne GABARDI: *Negotiating Postmodernism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, 33–34.

19 Compare Avril BELL: 'Half-castes' and 'White Natives': The Politics of Māori-Pākehā Hybrid Identities. In: *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand. Identity, Space and Place*. Claudia BELL/Steve MATTHEWMAN (eds.). Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2004, 121–138.

perceptions and images of Westerners in general and cross-cultural friendships with Westerners in particular.<sup>20</sup>

After independence in 1945, the Indonesian nation state for the first time offered an administrative category that, together with ethnicity, religion, custom (*adat*) and cultural tradition, attempted to unite the different societies and cultures that lived across the Indonesian archipelago. After long intense national debate, five principles (*pancasila*) were issued that all involved culture and religious groups could agree on that described and characterised the Indonesian nation.<sup>21</sup>

Even though politics were able to subsume those vast social and cultural differences for the sake of a functioning emerging state, there cannot be any doubt that the struggle for religious, cultural, social, and ethnic equality remains a central point of public debate and possible threat to Indonesia's political existence and national unity. Most Indonesians choose to belong to more than one group and construct multiple self-identifications such as Javanese, Balinese or Indonesian – or Chinese-Indonesian.

The political elite foresaw the possibilities of such complex identity building processes and tried to avoid an all too heterogeneous cultural mosaic that might work against the unified nation state. As one result, Indonesian culture discourse became a highly politicised endeavour. For the first two presidents Sukarno and Suharto the process of nation building (*pembangunan*) was inextricably linked to the construction of a national Indonesian culture, of which the establishment of Bahasa Indonesia as lingua franca was another important unifying mechanism. In postcolonial Indonesia, the Javanese culture discourse initiated worked towards cultural homogenisation and established 'authentic' (*asli*) Javanese tradition (*tradisi*) as a hegemonic discourse, which, until today, exerts tremendous influence on Indonesian perceptions of sociality.<sup>22</sup> This politicised hegemonic culture discourse is gendered and legitimises the rule of the heterosexual male. Related herewith is a naturalised asymmetry in indigenous conceptions of relatedness that sees the older male father figure (*bapak*) at the top of the social hierarchy. Along these lines, the whole Indonesian society was constructed as a family with Suharto as the wise Javanese *bapak* at the top.

As the discussion of the Indonesian material will show, especially there exist

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20 See Meike FECHTER: *Transnational lives. Expatriates in Indonesia*. Aldershot, Burlington: Routledge, 2007. She presents a very informative account on Western expatriates in Java / Indonesia and the related colonial- and postcolonial imaginations of the 'other' by Indonesians and Westerners alike.

21 Niels MULDER: *Southeast Asian Images. Towards a civil society?* Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kansius, 2005, 41.

22 See John PEMPERTON: *On the subject of "Java"*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1994, 9.



different notions of relatedness and actors freely mix global notions of relatedness with the aforementioned existing local perceptions. These practices allow for multiple and often divergent possibilities of self-identification. Such multiple identifications might complement, contradict, and confront one another in the course of daily life. As one result, the clear distinction into traditional social, cultural and religious groups has become less obvious than only some years ago.<sup>23</sup>

## Locating Friendship in New Zealand and Java / Indonesia

Before turning to the case studies of cross-cultural friendship, we need to specify the local friendship conceptions of the actors we will be discussing. The following is a brief summary of New Zealand Māori and Indonesian, or Javanese respectively, conceptions of relatedness relevant to the subsequent analysis.

Our empirical findings support friendship as a distinct social category of relatedness that varies in form and contents depending on situation and context. In both studies, friendship was conceptualised by the majority of actors as an intimate personal relationship based on ideas of trust, reciprocity, and relative permanence or stability. In distinction to other personal relationships, for instance, family, it was conceptualised as voluntary, but not exclusive. This ideal conception more or less corresponds with the classic notion of a symmetrical relation among equals prevailing in Western-European friendship discourse. This may be interpreted in such a way as to confirm the assumption that this particular type of friendship can be found in relatively heterogeneous social worlds, in which friendship provides the individual with a sense of individual self and of belonging in the world. However, at closer inspection, this ideal conception of friendship in the New Zealand and Indonesian context of course goes back to the specific historical-cultural discourses.<sup>24</sup> Data from both field sites also reveal divergence from this ideal on the level of social practice.

As a voluntary social category, friendship ties are actively constructed and maintained by the actors according to their specific individual needs and values.

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23 The anthropology of Java basically agrees on the division into the more traditional and syncretic *abangan*, the pious Muslim *santri* and the aristocratic *priyay* traditionally employed as administrators of the royal courts of Java. For more information see Clifford GERTZ: *The religion of Java*. New York: The Free Press, 1969. However, the boundaries between these groups should neither be perceived as static, nor the notion of belonging as exclusive.

24 Compare Eric Anton HEUSER: *Freundschaft als soziale Praxis. Freundschaftskonzeptionen in Indonesien. Theoretische Implikationen, Historische Dimensionen und soziale Handlungsräume*. In: *Quo Vadis Indonesia? Neueste Beiträge des Doktoranden Netzwerk Indonesien*. Eva STREIFENEDER, Boryano RICKUM (eds.). Berlin: Humboldt-Universität Südostasien Working Papers 35, 2009, 93 – 108.

Often, friendships correspond to and confirm collective norms and accepted social practices, but there is evidence that friendships are also utilised in more subversive ways. In fact, they may provide social spaces in which actors live out practices and ideals that might clash with the social norms of their family, for instance, and/or with their immediate social environment.

As in other societal contexts, the ideal of friendship as a symmetrical bond among equals co-exists with a range of conceptions and types of friendship that – measured by the prevalent Western-European friendship ideal – may sometimes not even qualify as friendship and may instead be categorised under related social terminology such as patronage or kinship. Traditionally, the Javanese context in particular allows for greater degrees of asymmetry in social relationships. Especially among the older generations the family remains the most important social organisation, inside which the father (*bapak*) functions as the head of family. In Māori society, too, kinship traditionally constitutes the main form of social organisation. Not surprisingly then, friendship was frequently defined as a relationship within or in relation to family, but also as romantic relationships or business contacts.

Consistent with other research findings, the data show that different age groups juggle their social relationships differently. In general, the younger generations tend to engage more flexibly in a wider range of relationships. Depending on socio-cultural context and individual characteristics, some actors manoeuvre different types of relations very skilfully. In their close interaction with friends, they live out individual needs and interests that they do not find in other personal relations, such as family. By engaging in different types of social relations, they actively construct individual modes of identification and senses of belonging to different groups and places.

#### Aotearoa New Zealand

In the New Zealand Māori context, the conception of friendship as an intimate relationship overlaps most notably with the notion of the family, the *whānau*. The central value of genealogy (*whakapapa*) in Māori society means that kinship constitutes the main social relation, leaving only little space for other forms of relatedness. This is especially clear in formal greeting situations, for at the outset of any significant gathering Māori customarily insist on establishing a common link by means of tracing their genealogical connections (*whakapapa*).<sup>25</sup>

25 Also see: Erik SCHWIMMER: Friendship and Kinship: An Attempt to Relate Two Anthropological Concepts. In: The Compact. Selected Dimensions of Friendship. Elliott LEYTON (ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1974, 49 – 70.

Traditionally, the extended family (*whānau*) takes a central stage as provider of intimacy and care, as well as material safety. As in other Polynesian societies, it serves as a model for collective behaviour and friendly interaction. What is more, the *whānau* has become in recent decades a powerful symbol of Māori traditions and customs (*tikanga Māori*)<sup>26</sup>; its central importance as a unit of care and support is stressed in both public and private discourse. More importantly, the contemporary notion of the *whānau* refers to a highly flexible social category that may also be applied to non-kin groups who are connected, for instance, by shared interests, missions, and like minds. Not surprisingly, then, friendship in the Māori context is often framed in kinship terminology: For instance, the word *whakawhanaungatanga*, literally, ‘the making of relations’ is often used to refer to the establishment and maintenance of positive social relations, or, friendships. In fact, the contemporary Māori term for ‘friendship’, *whakahoanga*, is less frequently used by Māori actors.

There does however exist a term that is used often across gender and age. The generic Māori term for ‘friend’, *hoa*, denotes a relatively unrestrained, affectionate and private personal relationship in the absence of relative seniority. *Hoa*, above all, refers to a qualitative dimension, marking a particular relationship as affectionate and intimate. This is also expressed in the use of the word *aroha* (love, affection) and other emotive terms in reference to friendship, for instance, *hononga*, which may be translated as ‘connection’, ‘bond’ or ‘link’, but also as ‘alliance’. Similar to English descriptive terms for friendships (e.g., ‘close friends’ as opposed to ‘just friends’ or acquaintances, ‘work friends’, ‘sports mates’), *hoa* may be combined with other terms in order to specify the type of relationship, for instance, *hoa mahi* – work friend, (from *mahi* – work), *hoa tata* – neighbour (from *tata* – nearby), *hoa takatāpui* – close friend (also: homosexual) etc. The terms *hoa tane* (male friend) and *hoa wahine* (female friend) are also used to refer to one’s spouse or partner respectively.

Since both *hoa* and *whānau* can refer to kin as well as non-kin relations, friends and family are not easily distinguishable categories. What is more, as the vast majority of Māori speak English as their first language, the language of New Zealand majority culture, both English and Māori friendship terminology are used depending on socio-cultural context and partners of interaction. Māori conceptions and terminology not only co-exist with Western-European friendship ideals and practices, but are employed flexibly, sometimes interchangeably, in the actors’ everyday experiences and life-worlds.

While the term *hoa* emphasises the symmetrical dimension of a relationship, asymmetrical dimensions are usually framed in terms of the principle of se-

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26 Compare Joan METGE: *New Growth from Old: The Whānau in the Modern World*. Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1995.

niority. Social status is traditionally accorded to seniority of descent, i. e., the elder (individual or group) ranked above the younger.<sup>27</sup> Nowadays, the principle of *tuakana* (the elder) and *teina* (the younger) remains an important social mechanism for individuals' and groups' relations with one another, including friendships. However, while age and even status difference were acknowledged even in close friendships, the more instrumental or asymmetrical aspects tended to be downplayed by many actors – at least on a rhetorical level. Furthermore, despite acknowledging material, social and personal benefits received through friendships, many actors felt somewhat uncomfortable to talk about these benefits where close personal relationships were concerned.

In general, there exists a reluctance to talk about the asymmetrical or strategic aspects of friendship, among Māori and Pākehā-Europeans alike. This may be explained in part by local value systems, which favour ideals of generosity, humbleness, and reciprocity (*utu*), as well as loyalty and an attitude of 'polite reservation'. However, exceptions can be found. Especially Asian actors and to some extent also Pacific Islanders tend to talk about instrumental aspects of friendship more freely, in particular those who were born and raised overseas. A possible reason for this divergence may be found in the social realities in the countries of origin, in which friendships often provide not only emotional support and pleasure but indispensable social and material resources. While this argument remains highly speculative and should accordingly be treated with great care, it does, however, relate to some findings in the Javanese context.

#### Java / Indonesia

Javanese ideal discourses of sociability remain informed by the ethics of the *kejawen*, the Javanese mystical belief system.<sup>28</sup> Related behaviour codes derived from the *kejawen* influence social discourse and often make cross-cultural interaction a complicated endeavour. *Kejawen* is also translated as 'Javaneseness' or 'Javanism' and is "a descriptive label for those elements of Javanese culture that are considered to be essentially Javanese"<sup>29</sup>. These elements are believed to derive from the Hindu-Buddhist period of Javanese history. In their totality, these cultural values form a system of thought which provides Javanese society with a 'code of conduct' for daily life. According to Javanese worldview the elderly and teachers (*guru*) have mastered the cosmic secrets of the *kejawen* and

27 For instance, Joan METGE: *The Māoris of New Zealand*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976, 7.

28 Often non-indigenous worldviews that are officially recognised as 'religion' in Indonesia (Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist).

29 Niels MULDER: *Inside Indonesian society*. Amsterdam, Singapore: The Pepin Press, 1996, 16.

help to preserve Javanese custom.<sup>30</sup> They are positioned above the rest of the population. This asymmetric worldview extends into social discourse and influences the acceptance of hierarchies in society, but it also serves as a blueprint for indigenous perceptions of relatedness.

The family is perceived as a mirror image of the cosmic order, where God is positioned above mankind. This general asymmetry is usually downplayed by the Javanese attitude of politeness and corresponds with an attitude of respect (*hormat*). Especially the asymmetry in more instrumental friendships can be downplayed by the public acknowledgement of status. During interviews, informants were rather reluctant to acknowledge asymmetry openly. The ones positioned higher due to age or social/ economic status emphasised an egalitarian model of society and the importance of all Indonesians being the same; they often saw their interactions with people of lower status (for example employees and housemaids) as a local form of charity.<sup>31</sup>

The Indonesian data shows an important inter-generational difference: Older informants stressed the maintenance of social harmony in form of actively engaging in village (*desa*) life and mentioned more instrumental friendship relations like being part of reciprocal neighbour networks. Especially for the older actors, and quite contrary to European ideal views on friendship, looser and more instrumental friendship types play a central role in their everyday life. The most common friendship type is *teman*, which can be described as a loose friend.<sup>32</sup> *Teman* is a very flexible category that often incorporates notions of rather loose friendships and far acquaintances up to more intimate friendship relations that are used for close friends (*teman dekat*).

In a village or a smaller urban administrative area, work friends (*teman kerja*) or even closer types of *teman*-friends are generally speaking not picked on the grounds of mutual sympathy, but pre-selected by the living situation in a smaller community. Informants in such environments tended to identify members of their *keluarga* as their closest friends (*teman akrab* or *sahabat*), whereas *teman* from outside the family were generally speaking seen as useful contacts that provided important resources for organising daily life.<sup>33</sup> Friendship relations in

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30 For more information on *kejawan* and Javanese culture please see Andrew BEATTY: Varieties in Javanese religion: An anthropological account. Cambridge, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Niels MULDER: Mysticism in Java. Ideology in Indonesia. Yogyakarta: Kanisuis, 2005.

31 This formal attitude corresponds with political propaganda of the Suharto years that worked towards the construction of the notion of a unified nation (*satu negara, satu bangsa*).

32 There exist other friendship types that constitute an emotional and intimate bond. *Sahabat* can be translated as best friend. The *sahabat* category (like the *teman* category) is divided into different subtypes describing varying degrees of intimacy.

33 This is not to say that emotional bonds outside the family in form of friendships do not exist among informants of the older generation. But informants in this age group show an ac-

form of *teman*-friendships frequently evolve around topics like providing mutual help during harvest time and the collective organisation of village life. Younger informants on the other hand ascribed friendship a more central role in their lives and perceived it as voluntary and more intimate relations, in which they can express individuality.

Traditionally, the family (*keluarga*) constitutes the space for intimacy, and association with a family served as the main source from which to construct social identities. As already mentioned, until today friendship as a category in its own right appears to be of minor importance in Indonesian ideals of sociability. Instead, kinship, patronage and strategic alliances constitute the main social relations. However, with the increase of global media flows and the spread of internet access, Western perceptions of relatedness have gained influence. As a result, in particular the friendship practices of the younger generation often resemble in significant ways Western friendship practices and ideals of sociality. Similar to the New Zealand societal context, different conceptions of relatedness co-exist, cross and even merge in the actors' individual life-worlds and experiences.

The following cases from New Zealand and Java / Indonesia will show how actors from younger generations engage in different forms of social relationships, how they manoeuvre across social boundaries and how they use this to construct individual identities. Data from both societies shows that kinship relations, or kin terminology respectively, tend to be used to construct belonging to ethnic groups, whereas friendship is used more broadly to fulfil personal needs such as the need for emotional belonging.

## Cases Studies – Cross-cultural Friendship Practices

The four case studies (two from each society) are presented in order to (a) demonstrate further empirical support for some of the points touched so far, as well as (b), to draw attention to the significance of socio-cultural context and actors' lived experiences for the analysis of friendship, and finally (c) to show how friendship relations are embedded in a wider setting of social relationships and how they overlap with other types of sociality.

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celerated tendency to construct close friendships (*teman akrab*) based on sympathy and mutual trust with family members, either siblings (*saudara*) or cousins (*saudara sepupu*).

## Aotearoa New Zealand

The New Zealand data reaffirm the intersection of different types of sociality. The primacy of the *whānau* relation in contemporary Māori society is supported by the empirical data. Central qualities are the notion of extending care to others (*manaakitanga*) and cultural affection or empathy (*aroha*) in combination with the idea of shared ancestry through genealogy (*whakapapa*). This ideal conception is held up while at the same time acknowledging the existence of dysfunctional *whānau* relations who can be exploitative, abusive, neglecting, dependent, eroding and destabilising for their members. As the two examples below will show, the *whānau* constitutes an inclusive social category that is used flexibly by the actors to refer to both kin and non-kin relations with Māori, but also with non-Māori actors.

In contrast to the English ‘friendship’, the notion of the *whānau* – and of Māori idioms in general – often serves to highlight a culture-specific perspective, or a ‘culturally charged’ context respectively. Relationships, including friendships, that are practised in, or allocated to respectively, the Māori ‘world’, are often framed in *whānau* terminology, thus underlining a culture-specific perspective on these relationships. Such *whānau* friendships often provide important cultural spaces in which cultural identifications are (re)produced.

In comparison to their Pākehā peers, Māori tend to engage in a greater number of cross-cultural friendships, especially in the urban areas, simply because they have to interact in a majority dominated environment on a regular basis. Many Māori actors conceptualise their social worlds along bicultural lines: They talk about the Māori world and the Pākehā world, their Māori ‘side’ and their Pākehā “side”, their Māori friends and their Pākehā friends. The specifics of inter-group relations and culture discourse have led here to the co-existence of multiple ‘worlds’ and notions of relatedness that are experienced differently depending on individual identifications and life experiences. The two ‘worlds’ intersect in various ways. This also influences the way individual actors experience and practise friendships with others. As the two following cases will show, actors handle these different worlds and types of social relations in ways that enable them to (re)construct themselves according to individual life-worlds and emotional needs.

## Katerina

Katerina, a Māori woman in her fifties, lives in a small rural settlement near Auckland. She is married to a Māori man, with whom she has adult children and grandchildren. In her immediate neighbourhood live other Māori families, most

of whom are affinal *whānau* relations, as well as Pākehā families. However, the population in her wider neighbourhood is predominately Pākehā-European, even more so than in her work environment in the city. At her workplace she spends most of her time, a place that she experiences as “a Pākehā environment”, as she told me.

Katerina feels she was raised more or less “like a Pākehā”, that is, without knowledge of her genealogy (*whakapapa*), of the Māori language (*te reo*), or of Māori customs (*tikanga*). She grew up in her nuclear family far away from her extended *whānau* relations. Like other Māori families at the time, her parents had consciously decided to raise their children “the Pākehā way” in order to make them fit for life in a Pākehā dominated society. As a child, being Māori for Katerina was associated with feelings of inferiority and encounters of racism. In later life, this led to personal identity crisis and subsequent search for cultural and spiritual healing.<sup>34</sup> Reconnecting with her *whānau* relations as well as to her ancestral places was a major part of this search. When Agnes first met Katerina, she was one of several adult students enrolled in Māori language classes as part of her effort at re-learning her language and thereby retrieving part of her cultural heritage as Māori.<sup>35</sup>

Katerina actively embraces and expresses her Māori identity, for instance, by wearing the traditional women’s facial tattoo (*tā moko*). Katerina is positively identifiable as Māori, an identity she makes sure is respected by others. Not surprisingly, her social friendship network extends into the artistic and political activist Māori scene. Despite – or because of – this relatively strong sense of cultural difference, and pride in being a Māori woman, Katerina nowadays interacts easily and comfortably in a Pākehā dominated environment. In fact, most of her everyday friendships are friendships with Pākehā at her work-place. Opportunity in terms of shared locality and time play major roles here.

Like many other Māori, Katerina distinguishes between her friendships with Pākehā and her friendships with Māori.<sup>36</sup> In the latter, the notion of the *whānau* as an indigenous model of social interaction and relatedness plays a central role:

What is the difference? Probably a shared ancestry, I don’t mean like the same *whakapapa* [genealogy], I mean shared ancestry, shared effects of colonisation. I mean I

34 She talks of this search in terms of a personal “journey”. I have elaborated on this point in my M.A.-dissertation: Agnes BRANDT: Mana Wahine – Feminisms, Māori Sovereignty and Lived Experiences of Māori Women. Unpublished M.A.-thesis: Free University Berlin, 2006.

35 It should be noted here, that only a minority of Māori today can speak the Māori language. As a part of the systematic revival of Māori culture since the 1970s, learning the language is often seen as a powerful means of cultural learning and healing.

36 Katerina also maintains a number of cross-cultural friendships with Asians, Pacific peoples, and other New Zealanders as well as Non-New Zealanders. As already noted above, this paper focuses on Māori-Pākehā interaction.



don't have to explain to a Māori why I don't speak *te reo* [the Māori language], for instance (...) Shared experiences from a Māori point of view, (...), a cultural binding, that's the difference between my intimate friends who are Pākehā and my *whānau* friends who are Māori.

*Whānau* for Katerina may refer to several groups of persons: to her extended and immediate kin who she does not refer to as friends, to kin who she refers to as friends, in general to intimate friendships with other Māori, and for other groups that she is a member of but that do not necessarily fit the 'friend' category. While she uses the term predominately in reference to relations with other Māori, she sometimes uses it to refer to her intimate relations with Pākehā. For instance, she refers to her Pākehā friends at her workplace in both Māori and English kin terminology: She calls them *tuakana* and *teina* (older and younger sister), *koro* (old man), uncle, aunty, or sister, and all of them together *whānau*. Even though she cherishes these everyday quasi-kin relations, on the whole, she tends to experience her friendships with Māori as more intimate. This intimacy is based on the notion of a shared indigenous identity.

In general, Māori-Pākehā friendships tend to follow the rules and norms of Pākehā society and accepted Western-European friendship practices. Often, the Māori 'world' is more or less kept out in order to avoid divergence, and often, the Pākehā friend remains rather ignorant of this 'other world'. Katerina, too, in many ways keeps the two worlds apart. Nevertheless, she also makes a conscious effort at deconstructing existing boundaries between herself and her Pākehā friends: She teaches them Māori terminology, introduces them to Māori music and chants, shows them Māori crafts and arts, and sometimes explains Māori customs. She feels she thereby reaches a deeper level of understanding between herself and her Pākehā friends, an understanding that she feels is often lacking in majority New Zealand society, especially among older generations.

However, her friendship experiences with Pākehā remain ambivalent. For instance, when she says that she does not have to explain to a Māori why she does not speak the Māori language (see the above quote). At the time, one of her Pākehā friends had commented on her lack of knowledge of the Māori language. He neither knew of her problematic past experiences and identity crisis as a Māori, nor of her effort at learning the Māori language. What he had intended as a harmless joke, she experienced as a painful and ignorant remark that confirmed for her – once more – what she perceives as a general lack of understanding among Pākehā towards Māori.

It is this general lack of understanding that Katerina feels precludes her from connecting with (some) Pākehā as intimately as with (some) Māori – a lack that is intertwined with her socio-political perception of the colonial past as well as with her individual life course. She experienced the above-mentioned incident in

emotionally difficult ways, because it brought to the fore the conflict arising from her feeling of cultural difference, a feeling that is rooted in her upbringing “the Pākehā way” as well as the experience of discrimination as a Māori. Not only did her friend stir an old wound, but the incidence re-confirmed her own feeling of being different as Māori, thereby reinforcing existing cultural boundaries. In this instance, Katerina made a conscious effort at maintaining the friendship. She did so by focusing on the positive characteristics of her friend and on the benefits of this particular friendship. The conflict was thus resolved. However, incidences such as this one lead some Māori actors to exercise caution in their cross-cultural friendships with Pākehā and to more or less keep the two ‘worlds’ apart.

In another instance following the above one, Katerina decided to not take another close Pākehā work-friend of hers to a family dinner in order to avoid possible miscommunication and friction. In her own words:

Well, I would like to think that she [her friend] wouldn’t have [offended] but (...) just a “you Māori” remark. I mean if she says that to me “you Māoris” I’ll just say “you Pākehā” don’t worry we’re friends but if she was to say that in front of my in-laws (...) They haven’t had an understanding of the relationship between us so they might take offence with that. (...) [I]t’s a fine balance.

Both instances demonstrate well the challenges posed to cross-cultural friendships in a societal context such as New Zealand, where culture politics is a highly sensitive issue and group relations remain problematic for some actors. Katerina’s experiences demonstrate well the high degree of sensitivity in and fragility of cross-cultural relations. By calling her Pākehā friends *whānau*, Katerina tries to construct a sense of sameness between herself and her friends. She makes an effort at crossing-over a cultural boundary that continues to be problematic for her in terms of cultural identification and belonging. Nevertheless, her Pākehā *whānau* remains a potential source of friction and insecurity. As a result, certain aspects stay within her Māori *whānau*. It is these intra-cultural relations, above all others, that provide her with emotional as well as material support and stability.

In contrast to many members of Katerina’s generation, for younger Māori the picture is often a different one. In particular those who identify as both Māori and Pākehā, those who have grown up in cross-cultural family constellations, and/or those who associate a positive self-image with being Māori feel comfortable in and move easily between the two worlds in their everyday lives. For them, cultural difference in friendships is unproblematic in that they manoeuvre easily and more or less unconsciously in-between cultural boundaries. As the next case will show, ‘culture’, for this group, is often just one possible identi-

fiction among many that may, or may not, play a role in their lives and friendships. Accordingly, the dynamics of *whānau* and friendship may be experienced rather differently.

### Josh

Josh is a man in his late twenties. He is a young father and lives in a relationship with a European-Pākehā woman. In many ways, Josh exemplifies well the generation following Katerina's. His father belonged to the generation of Māori, who were punished for speaking Māori at school. Even though Josh also says he was brought up "a lot more Pākehā" than Māori, he feels that his father exposed him and his siblings sufficiently to Māori culture, "so that if we wanted to go back ourselves we would." As an adult, Josh wanted to connect more to his Māori side. Like Katerina and many others, he made a conscious effort to learn more about Māori culture and tradition by meeting *whānau* relations and ancestral places, by learning the Māori language as well as *tikanga* (customs).

As the offspring of a Pākehā mother and a Māori father, Josh – when asked – identifies as both, Māori *and* Pākehā. As he says, he does not want to choose one side over the other for he feels like a mixture of both. In contrast to Katerina, who is wearing the traditional facial tattoo, Josh says his physical appearance means that he can fit into both categories, Māori and/or Pākehā. Josh has neither experienced racism nor cultural identity crisis, and he reports on feeling very comfortable in his multiple worlds since childhood. Growing up, Josh's family background and the small town he lived in provided him with a social environment, in which Māori and Pākehā interacted on a frequent basis. Feeling "more Pākehā" himself, most of his friends were indeed Pākehā, but his two "best mates", as he calls them, were a Pākehā and a Māori. With them he shared his interest in sports and other activities, such as fishing and "general blokey stuff". In combination with an outgoing and open personality, this background enables him today to easily form friendships "with anyone", as he says, with whom he shares, for instance, interests in sports, humour, or an outgoing personality. This is reflected in a heterogeneous social network that includes persons from a range of age groups, religious and ethnic affiliations.

Even though he gets along with a lot of people, Josh, like Katerina, locates his most intimate friendships within his family. His most intimate friendships, he says, are those with his partner, his son, his siblings and parents. For Josh, *whānau* refers to both, Māori and Pākehā family relations. However, he does not use the word *whānau* in the same way as Katerina does. He uses the word *whanaunga* (relative, relation, kin) to refer to his extended family relations and to

Māori groups, which he is a member of. Even though some of his particularly close friends are like family to him, he still refers to them as ‘friends’, or ‘mates’.

For Josh, his identification as Māori is one among many and one that usually stays within the confines of *tangihanga* (burial ceremony) and family celebrations, but also in other cultural spaces, such as Māori language classes. In contrast to Katerina, who frequently uses Māori terminology to refer to her social relationships and who experiences cultural difference in her interaction with others, Josh repeatedly underscored the irrelevance of cultural and ethnic affiliation – in friendship as in other relations. For him, friendship is solely based on individual traits, personal sympathy and affection as well as shared interests. When Josh talks of difference, it is rarely in terms of Māori and Pākehā but rather in terms of New Zealanders and non-New Zealanders. Being both Māori and Pākehā himself, and placing positive value on both identifications, in his experience Māori and Pākehā are not easily distinguishable categories, but share major cultural characteristics and backgrounds. As he says:

[With Māori and Pākehā] you might have a cultural difference but mainly it’s just an individual difference, you know, cause you’ve grown up in the same environment most things are the same, so it’s not really a cultural issue it’s just getting to know the other person.

Shared experiences and background under the notion of a conjoint New Zealand culture based on shared history is a recurrent theme in my data, especially among the younger generations. Culture, or rather cultural difference, here becomes an individual trait, an issue of fluid and shifting boundaries between individuals. For Josh, the differences between his friendships with Māori and with Pākehā are only marginal and highly context-dependent. However, he does construct cultural difference in relation to Asian immigrants, for instance, who speak a different language and who might have different religious affiliations. This corresponds with a bicultural ideal of the ‘two founding nations’ of the New Zealand state under the Treaty, but without denying the importance of acknowledging ‘other’ groups and the notion of a ‘multicultural’ New Zealand.

Cultural difference – if detectable at all – is overcome by concentrating on shared commonalities. In his own words:

(...) I don’t see there being any different, maybe only cultural differences but you basically just talk around those, you know, that’s just another conversation point. (...) you just, you know, you go “oh what about and what do you guys think about, blah, blah, blah” and so it’s just a, you come to realise that (...) the similarities between you are much more than the differences.

Similar to Katerina, Josh's strategy for dealing with culture-based difference and/or conflict in friendships is to either ignore them or to overcome them by means of focusing on similarities.

Josh exemplifies well a younger generation of biculturally socialised Māori for whom cultural boundaries run along very different lines than for members of the older generations. Instead of feeling different, or other, these actors construct themselves as belonging to a bicultural New Zealand, in which Māori and Pākehā spaces can do both, coexist and merge. Bicultural life-worlds in combination with a positive self-image and outgoing personalities constitute important social resources here that not only enable the formation and maintenance of a range of friendships (intra- and cross-cultural), but also lead to flexible life-worlds, in which difference is actively and continuously constructed, de- and re-constructed within an ever-changing social network of a great range of personal relations.

#### Java / Indonesia

The New Zealand findings are in part supported by the results of the Indonesian study, which display some striking similarities in the ways younger actors manoeuvre across and between cultural and social boundaries in friendships. However, in the Indonesian context the dynamics evolve around more traditional conceptions and relatedness as defined by the family on one hand, and on assumptions of Western friendship ideals and practices on the other hand. As the two cases from Java / Indonesia will show, kinship and associated relations serve to construct or reproduce cultural and ethnic belonging on the grounds of descent, whereas friendship is used to experience personal freedom and individuality in lifestyle choices.

In 1998, the fall of the authoritarian Suharto regime initiated processes of socio-cultural change that provided more possibilities to connect existing local ideal discourses with global images of relatedness. Mbak Yani and Ibu Mira<sup>37</sup> as the examples presented here exploit these new possibilities to be both, modern and traditional: close relations to their family and kinship circles enables them to comply with ethnic and cultural tradition, whereas by means of practicing their cross-cultural friendships, they are able to construct globalised versions of modern Indonesian women. This seems to be a more general pattern of using and exploiting cultural difference among the younger Indonesian generations.

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37 *Mbak* is used to refer to a younger girl and/ or unmarried young woman, *Ibu* is the proper addressing of a married and older woman, it also means mother.

Mbak Yani

Yani is a young Sino-Indonesian woman. When I first met her in March 2006, she was 24 years old, lived in Yogyakarta/Java and was about to complete her university degree. She was raised in Sumatra in a predominantly Chinese environment. Both of her parents are of Chinese descent, and like many other Sino-Indonesians, Yani's family members have experienced discrimination due to their ethnic background. The continuing history of exclusion must be seen as one of the reasons why Sino-Indonesians tend not to mingle with native Indonesians (*pribumi*).

Yani is influenced by this historical development. Even though she is living far away from her parents in Yogyakarta, she is part of an ethnic Chinese network; living in a Chinese-owned student accommodation was only one sign of it.

The family is the space where Yani's ethnic identity is being reproduced: she speaks Hokkain with her parents and brother, the food prepared is Chinese, and the traditional Chinese holidays are celebrated. Inside Yani's family exist distinct ideas of appropriate behaviour, and her parents prefer her to engage in friendships as well as romantic engagements with other Sino-Indonesians. Closer private relations with indigenous Indonesians (*pribumi*), on the other hand, are discouraged.

Apart from her home family, Yani is part of several Chinese networks through which she maintains this identity. Such ethnic networks exist all over Java / Indonesia and they provide social spaces in which members of the same ethnic group construct affectionate relationships, business ties, or form alliances in form of marriages. Through the network, Yani's parents, who are also network members, are able to secure social control over their daughter. By maintaining looser forms of *teman*-friendships into the Chinese community, Yani complies with her parents' ideas of an appropriate Chinese lifestyle. Especially for Sino-Indonesians, such networks have provided important tools to resist marginalisation and exclusion from the majority of the Indonesian society. They also acted as mechanisms for guarding social conventions and forms of cultural expression.<sup>38</sup> The experience of being different Yani compensates with her open personality and interest in other, especially Western cultures. She is always in the mood for meeting new people and learning about new cultures. This is reflected in her social environment and her friendship choices in particular.

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38 COPPEL mentions that many Chinese Indonesians have been marginalised and felt alienated from the surrounding Indonesian society. In 1998, with the fall of Suharto, a wave of anti-Chinese violence swept over the country and escalated in May 1998 in brutal riots in Medan, Jakarta, and Solo. Charles A. COPPEL: *Researching at the Margins*. In: *Chinese Indonesians. Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*. Tim LINDSEY (ed.). Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2005, 1 – 3, 13.

Yani is influenced by images of the 'West' that are transmitted by global media flows and she maintains several friendships with Westerners. According to Yani, Westerners are more open about their emotions and desires. This openness makes these cross-cultural friendships so attractive to her. In fact, they are one of the most important motivations for her to befriend them. However, this collides with her parents' ideals of a Chinese daughter who is supposed to relate to other Sino-Indonesians and later marry one. Since the ideals of friendship and family appear as opposed to each other, they have led Yani to construct two different and physically unrelated life-worlds that clash and leave her questioning her own identity:

I'm living my life with the idea I just do what I have to do. What I have to do is indoctrinated [...] from my parents. So now that's why I'm losing my identity, just be *bingung*, confused about myself because I have to choose between what I want and what is right [and] what [is] wrong. And I cannot say 'no' to my parents because this can be so inappropriate and also I learn to do just what I want to do, [that is] what I feel right now from mixing with the Western friend.

This quote demonstrated well what Yani looks for in her cross-cultural friendships with Westerners. As she says, in these friendships she can fulfil her individual needs, needs that she feels are right, but her parents feel are wrong. While she pursues her friendships with Westerners, she also feels a strong obligation to her Chinese background and her parents. Rather than constructing hybrid spaces in which cultural differences melt into new forms of negotiation, Yani is positioned in-between her two different life-worlds, feeling right and wrong in both, her Sino-Indonesian and her cross-cultural relationships. She is in-between different cultures as well as in-between different constructs of relatedness as her globalised ideals of friendship clash with her parents' conceptions of ideal social relationships. When I asked her how she juggles or integrates those different worlds, she said:

I think [I have] a double life. I reach a point that I want to tell them [her parents] everything and then try to be honest [...] but they will never ever try to understand [...] I am too drawn to the freedom of speech with my [Western] friends [...]. I don't know [whether] it's about Western or me [...] so I think I just have to keep having the double life.

This feeling of being in-between is not new to Yani. As a Sino-Indonesian, she has been brought up in a predominantly Chinese-Indonesian environment and experienced cultural difference everyday whilst interacting with native Indonesians. Such skills appear to be crucial competences that make Yani so successful in handling her cross-cultural friendships with Westerners. These bicultural skills enable her to construct functioning personal relations with Western friends that allow her to realise her ideas of individual freedom. The

feeling of sameness constructed in relation to Westerners is based on her assumption that they are placed at the margins of Indonesian society – just like herself as a Sino-Indonesian.

On this note, the strategies Yani employs to handle the spectrum of socio-cultural differences in her social relationships are worth mentioning. Her management of the different cultures within and across her different social relationships such as family and friends show the careful separation and the reflected application of appropriate behaviour codes according to each social environment. The two parts of her social life presented here Yani uses to construct her identity of a modern and globalised Sino-Indonesian woman who is aware of her cultural heritage as well as being influenced by Western ideals of social relationships.

The second Indonesian case shows how actors manoeuvre between the cultures of their different social relationships, thereby carefully exploiting them for their personal advantage and emotional fulfilment.

#### Ibu Mira

Eric met Ibu Mira several times in Jakarta. At the end of his fieldwork, Eric stayed at her home in Jakarta for some weeks, where he had the chance of getting an in-depth point of view of her friends as well as her perceptions of friendships. Ibu Mira is 37 years old and lives in Jakarta. Her father comes from a little village on the island of Sumba; her mother is from the Philippines. She lives in a spacious house in Jakarta, inherited from her parents.

During the many hours Eric and Mira talked, the topic of friendship came up repeatedly in their conversations. She told Eric that one of her best friends was a German woman she had met whilst studying in Belgium. Soon he realised that all of the friendships Mira talked about were either with people of bicultural background or cross-cultural friendships. Even though the cross-cultural moment of her friendships appeared to be a constant source for misunderstandings, the constructed sameness in these relationships rested on her perception that she and her friends were different to the society they lived in.

The key to understanding Mira's friendships choices is related to her upbringing and her childhood experiences of socio-cultural dis-embedding. Her parents were among the many migrants who moved to Java between the 1950s and 1970s. During that time, the politics of homogenising Indonesian culture (also referred to as *Javanisation* or *Javanisasi*) were at a peak and other ethnic groups across the archipelago struggled to keep their identities. The culture politics of president Suharto in combination with the particular socio-cultural configurations of her family are responsible for Mira's way of handling her



interpersonal relationships. Her family and kinship ties on one side, and friendship networks on the other side appear as different, yet deeply intertwined and complimentary parts by which Mira is able to construct herself as a modern Sumbanese woman.

Her urban Jakarta life is characterised by individual lifestyle choices and cross-cultural friendships and her Sumbanese identity includes practices of local custom, fulfilling her traditional role as a daughter who is responsible to carry on the family's name. In her little village on Sumba, friendships are mostly congruent with family relations, whereas in Jakarta her friendships are influenced by personal choice and leisure activities. Mira meets people roughly of her age; they go out, cook together, and actively engage in the local art scene. At some stage I wondered how Mira constructed her cultural identity, given the rather different worlds she lived in. When I asked her where her cultural roots were, she answered

Definitely in my village, because people know me [there], because it's my clan and my grandfather was the one who established the village, and also the clan too and the responsibility of the clan goes down to my family.

Actually, it feels quite private [going to Sumba], it is like a personal privacy so to say. Sometimes it is exciting but sometimes stressful to invite friends and to go to Sumba. I am very shy then. When I am in Sumba I have to behave differently because I'm expected to be different, and I have a different role [than in Jakarta].

Ibu Mira prefers to keep her Jakarta friendship circles apart from her family life in Sumba. Village relations are too important and she carries too much responsibility to run the risk of endangering them, so she places careful attention to her kinship ties and to the fulfilment of traditional roles.

Similar to Yani, Mira's cultural background and her family represent the basis for her identity construction. She keeps it alive through regular visits to her village and her family. This effort also extends to Jakarta where she is part of a semi-official network of people who all share the biographical fact of being migrants from the same province, *Nusa Tenggara Timur* (NTT).<sup>39</sup> Since her parents have passed away, the elderly members of that network function as a parental substitute and general source of advice and guidance for the younger members. Often they are referred to as uncle (*om*) and aunt (*tante*), even when biological relations do not exist. Frequent meetings include family-like get-togethers and celebrations of religious festivities. The majority population of the

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39 *Nusa Tenggara Timur* (NTT) or East Nusa Tenggara in English is a province of the Republic of Indonesia and includes the eastern parts of the Lesser Sunda Islands (the Lesser Sunda Islands lie east of Java and extend from Bali to Timor. Sumatra and Java are separated by the Sunda Strait, a narrow channel linking the Indian Ocean with the Java Sea). The provincial capital of NTT is Kupang on West Timor.

NTT is Christian (both Catholic and Protestant), which is another marker of difference in predominant Muslim Java, but also a possibility to construct sameness among the network members. Especially the older members place importance on Christian religion, whereas the younger members appear to exploit ethnicity and local custom from the outer islands as markers for difference.

Sameness among younger network members is constructed by shared experiences of ambiguous feelings of socio-cultural detachment and belonging at the same time. Most of them are influenced by Western images and ideals of social relationships due to often extended stays in Western countries. In the interview, Ibu Mira explains that friendship for her begins with a feeling, an emotion that tells her intuitively that she has something in common with her opposite. Such people are mostly similar to herself. Sometimes they have lived and/ or studied abroad like herself, but most of her friends, she tells me, or not from Jakarta originally, they are often not even from Java. The experience of being non-locals is the main aspect by which Mira and her friends construct sameness. Mira's Sumbanese background has certainly equipped her with bi-cultural skills on one side, but to some extent it makes her a foreigner in her own city. She says:

[...] My close Indonesian friends would be either for me the second generation of NTT (Nusa Tenggara Timur) network, they're really close because this is family, close in that way. But other Indonesian friends close for me that are not necessarily part of that [network] but they became close, most of them would have studied abroad or live abroad as well [...] The similarity with them is that I have been elsewhere. I feel that makes it easier to discuss certain things with them than with my other Indonesian friends. For example talking about sexuality is easier with my Indonesian friends who have that experience of living abroad and also with most of my *bule*<sup>40</sup> close friends.

This interview sequence shows well how Mira juggles her different social worlds. Her closest friends she locates in two different socio-cultural spheres, yet, both of them are interrelated. Firstly, the NTT network functions like an extended family where local custom and tradition is upheld, especially among older members. Among the younger network members, Mira finds her closest friendships. The reasons why she befriends some of the younger members are shared experiences as well as their common cultural origin. The second space is Mira's cross-cultural friendships with Westerners. It is related to the first, because here too, the experience of being different in a certain socio-cultural context functions as a moment that creates closeness. With her *bule* friends, Mira enjoys talking about topics that she cannot discuss as openly with members of the NTT network, for

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40 The literal translation for *bule* is albino, but is also used as a colloquial term to refer to people with fair skin. It is mostly used to refer to Westerners.

instance, sexuality. Both her friendship spaces are separate, yet interrelated. In combination, they serve to fulfil her need for family relations and ethnic/ cultural belonging on the one hand, and the wish to live the life of a modern emancipated Indonesian woman who is in charge of her life on the other hand.

In both Yani's and Mira's case, close and intimate friendship is perceived and practiced as a relationship that is based on voluntary commitment and affection. Most of their friends are from different cultural backgrounds and have experienced discrimination due to their ethnic background and being a foreigner in a certain cultural context. This common experience fosters the development of friendship as an intimate bond beyond the family.

Kinship relations, on the other hand, are used by both to construct ethnic identifications as Sumbanese, Chinese and Indonesian women who value their cultural backgrounds. Family and kinship relations are a means to reproduce local traditional identities, for which translocal quasi-kinship networks like NTT and the Chinese community offer possibilities. Both cases show a complex overlapping of kinship relations and friendship, and they both reveal that younger actors tend to see kinship as ascribed roles and friendship as voluntary bonds. What is more, members of the younger generations are skilled in juggling the different conceptions and role expectations in different social relationships and exploit them for the sake of identity construction.

The Indonesian cases thus show that both, voluntary friendship and ascribed family roles offer identification possibilities that are indispensable for individual identity construction. It is this link between friendship and other social relationships that we argue needs more attention in upcoming friendship research.

## Discussion

The New Zealand and Indonesian cases reveal the deep entanglement of friendship practices, individual identity constructions and socio-cultural background. They also point at the interrelations of friendship and family.

In New Zealand, the politicised culture discourse structures individual friendship experiences and practices. Katerina's experience of being 'other' during childhood and her subsequent search for and appropriation of a positive Māori identity lead to dual friendship worlds which may intersect and overlap, but remain largely separate and sometimes problematic. Her most intimate friendships are with other Māori with whom she feels connected through her shared indigenous identity as well as culturally 'safe'. Her Pākehā friends are established on the grounds of shared locality, time as well as personal affection.

Her most intimate friendships, Katerina frames not only in terms of the English 'friendship' and the use of Māori and English words for 'friend' and *hoa*

respectively, but in terms of the Māori notion of *whānau* – family, or *whanaungatanga* – relatedness. The *whānau* in this case serves the important function of reproducing a sense of cultural self and belonging, its flexible and inclusive nature may also serve as a mechanism of integrating the two worlds. The notion of the *whānau* enables Katerina to construct her cross-cultural social relations with Pākehā within the safe confines of the Māori world, thereby actively seeking to deconstruct her own sense of cultural difference in these friendships.

In contrast, the younger Josh's bicultural family background and positive self-image since childhood leads him to render difference irrelevant, at least where Māori and Pākehā are concerned, and enables him to move easily in-between cultural boundaries. *Whānau* in this case applies to Pākehā and Māori relations alike and is restricted to the immediate and extended family, rather than friends (albeit not exclusively). Friendship becomes a highly individualised enterprise for the fulfilment of personal interests and likes as well as affection.

In Java / Indonesia, the availability of different social conceptions through rapid culture change and globalisation has opened possibilities for more intimate and individualised friendship conceptions in comparison to traditional practices and norms. This bears potential conflict in respect to existing local conceptions of relatedness. Similar to Josh, Yani's and Mira's upbringing in diverse socio-cultural contexts makes it easy for them to form cross-cultural friendships. However, the Indonesian cases differ from the New Zealand examples as actors construct sameness on the shared experience of cultural difference. Whereas Josh does not necessarily feel different in his everyday interactions with Māori or Pākehā, in the cases of Yani and Mira, it is their experience of being different that has enabled them to easily relate to and befriend people from various cultural backgrounds. The experience of cultural difference is something that they share with their friends. Their friends are different, like them, because of their respective cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This experience of being different, or 'other', resembles Katerina's experience of her friendships with Māori, which are more intimate because of shared colonial experience as 'other'.

What all of these cases show, is that a socialisation in multiple socio-cultural settings and life worlds not only goes along with multiple identifications, but that it is a major contributor to acquiring the social skills required for the establishment of successful cross-cultural friendships in later life. The informal and situative nature of friendships allows for a relatively high degree of flexibility in the construction of similarity and difference. As long as the actors succeed in establishing some common grounds or sufficient commonalities between self and other, the open nature of the friendship category enables them to concentrate on these similarities or commonalities thereby ignoring or rendering ir-

relevant potentially dividing factors (which change depending on personage and setting).<sup>41</sup>

However, as the examples also demonstrate, the process is not so much one of simply dissolving difference through the 'automatic' construction of hybrid spaces. Rather, it is one of almost playfully shifting and repositioning individual boundaries. The actors do so by drawing on their individual life experiences, which have equipped them with a kind of cultural sensibility that allows them to juggle these boundaries in constructive ways. This handling of perceived difference and sameness in friendships is a major recurrent theme in the actors' social lives. Difference is, after all, an ongoing interactional accomplishment.<sup>42</sup>

Based on the empirical data we discussed, we propose the concept of *trans-difference* as a suitable approach to frame the cases discussed above because it accounts for the high degree of flexibility in which the actors deflate and/or inflate difference and similarity in their interactions with others.<sup>43</sup> In contrast to other related concepts, such as difference and hybridity, the notion of trans-difference does not aim at the theoretical dissolution of difference, nor does it seek to take it as a fixed constant. Rather, it aims at taking up a fresh perspective on difference that accounts for multiple identifications within diverse and multi-layered socio-cultural contexts.<sup>44</sup>

The notion of transdifference also implies that actors reflect on their competences and apply them skilfully, thereby accounting for the actors' agency. As we tried to show, people construct, re- and deconstruct difference and sameness according to the need of their changing social settings. Cultural difference, in this sense, ought to be perceived as a resource that actors use for the sake of constructing multiple identifications and functioning cross-cultural friendships.

Roseneil, among others, points out how the existence of uncountable identities today offers innumerable possibilities for fashioning self-identities.<sup>45</sup>

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41 This supports sociological research findings that people tend to associate with their own kind. This principle is also referred to as homophily. For a comprehensive overview see Miller MCPHERSON/Lynn SMITH-LOVIN/James M. COOK: Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 2001, 415–444.

42 See for instance Candace WEST/Sarah FENSTERMAKER: Doing Difference. In: *Gender & Society* 9, 1995, 8–37.

43 Helmbrecht BREINIG / Klaus LÖSCH: Introduction: Difference and Transdifference. In: *Multiculturalism in Contemporary Societies: Perspectives on Difference and Trans-difference*. Helmbrecht BREINIG, J. GEBHARDT & K. LÖSCH (eds.). Erlangen: Universitätsbund, 2002, 11–36.

44 Lars ALLOLIO-NÄCKE/Britta KALSCHUEVER: Wege der Transdifferenz. In: *Differenzen anders denken. Bausteine zu einer Kulturtheorie der Transdifferenz*. ALLOLIO-NÄCKE/Britta KALSCHUEVER/Arne MANZESCHKE (eds.). Frankfurt, New York, 15–26.

45 Sasha ROSENEIL/Julie SEYMOUR: Practicing identities: Power and resistance. In: *Practicing*

However, not all identities are equally available to all actors, for example, because of socio-economic disadvantages or status reasons. As the examples presented here show, previous life experiences and socio-cultural upbringing influence actors' comfort and flexibility in combining different life worlds and juggling different conceptions of relatedness within those worlds. In the cases presented here, people 'use' their friendships for constructing themselves and others both individually and on the group level. The crucial point is that a person's relationships and notions of self and belonging are not just influenced by the wider social and cultural processes, rather they are creatively fashioned by the actors in their interaction with others.

As a social category that does not offer ascribed social roles, friendship frequently overlaps with more institutionalised forms of organisation like the family. In order to understand how actors create such intersections and for what reasons; and how they construct individual identifications in the process, friendship research needs to acknowledge the inclusive, dynamic and multi-faceted character of friendship. Especially research on cross-cultural friendships must take into account the processes of constructing multiple identifications and the construction of difference, as well as sameness, which may then open up new relationships and, ultimately, third spaces.